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Elsie A. Hastings Elementary School Handbook 2023-2024

PRINCIPAL'S MESSAGE:

Welcome to a **new** school year at Hastings Elementary School! We are thrilled to be welcoming your child to the **2023-2024 school year!** We look forward to providing them a safe, supportive, engaging, creative, and fun year filled with learning!

The information shared in this handout is specific to Hastings school, and serves as a supplement to the Westborough Elementary Schools Parent-Student Handbook. Our district and school website (www.westboroughk12.org) also provides a wealth of information.

Hastings School is a community of learners where academic, social, and personal growth are valued and nurtured. We are dedicated to ensuring every child learns, grows, and achieves. We believe in developing a partnership between home and school, and are excited for our work together as a team this year. We will continue to instill our motto "**Hastings has HEART**" in our students as we learn, model, and practice values of **Honesty, Empathy, Acceptance, Responsibility, and Teamwork!**

You will receive regular communication from the school. On Thursdays you will get an online newsletter outlining special events from our week in school, highlighting activities for Hastings students and families, and sharing important dates and reminders. If you do not have access to a computer and cannot receive information electronically, please contact the school at 508-836-7750.

As always, please know that we are available to speak with you if you have a question, want to share a concern or celebration, or discuss your child's educational experience.

The Hastings staff looks forward to making this year a positive and successful one for every child and family!

With Kindness,
Mrs. Julia D'Agata
Email: Dagataj@westboroughk12.org
Phone: 508-836-7750

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT HASTINGS SCHOOL

Information Included:

- Visitor Sign-In/School Security
 - Arrival/Dismissal Information
 - School Attendance
 - Breakfast, Lunch, & Snack Information
 - Safety Protocols
 - Family Communication
 - Birthdays
 - Clothing
 - Parent Guardian Participation
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Visitor Sign-In/School Security:

All school doors will remain locked during the day. Visitors may enter the building through the main entrance near the office. Visitors should ring the buzzer when they enter the vestibule. Office staff will remotely unlock the doors for visitors after identification is verified. Visitors should then proceed directly to the office to sign in and obtain a visitor badge before going to other parts of the building. Hastings staff members have been asked to stop any adult they see without a name tag and send them back to the office for proper sign-in. Parents and visitors must sign-out prior to leaving the building.

Arrival/Dismissal Information:

The hours of school are 8:50 to 3:05.

Arrival:

- **Bus** - Students that ride the bus to school arrive at Hastings between 8:30 and 8:45. Staff members will greet the students and unload the buses in the front of the school starting at 8:35, and direct students to their classrooms where they will be met by their teacher. In mid-August please refer to the Westborough Schools website (www.westboroughk12.org) for information regarding your child's bus route.
- **Parent Drop-Off (cars)** - If you plan to drop your student off at Hastings, arrive between 8:35 and 8:50. Please drive to the **back** of the building where a staff member will greet you. *Parents should remain in their car during drop off.* Staff are there to help your child exit the car safely. Staff members will be out back to unload cars from 8:35-8:50 every morning. If you arrive before 8:35 please wait in the car with your child until a staff member greets you. If you arrive after 8:50, please park your car and walk your child inside. You will need to sign them in as they will be considered tardy.
- **Parent Drop-Off (walkers)** - If you plan to walk your child to school, please walk them to the front door of the school. You must remain with your child until students are dismissed to their classrooms at 8:35.

Dismissal:

- **Bus** - If your child plans to take the bus home, students will be dismissed at 3:05. Buses will board between 3:05 and 3:20 before leaving Hastings. Please make sure you have arrangements for your child when they get off the bus. K and 1st grade students *must* have someone visible to greet them from the bus. If there is no safe adult, the bus company will bring any Kindergartener or 1st grader

back to school where the office will get in touch with the parent/guardian to come pick up the child.

- **Parent Pick-Up (cars)** - If you wish to pick up your child after school, please send a note to the office and your child's teacher informing him or her that your child will not ride the bus home and will be "parent pick-up." Students are dismissed at 3:05 everyday. To pick-up your child please pull into the Hastings parking lot and ***drive around the back of the building***. You will stop in front of the green gym doors and your child will be directed to your car. Please be prepared to show identification at the beginning of the year to the parent pick-up team.
- **Parent Pick-Up (walkers)** - If you wish to walk home with your child, please pick them up from the front of the building. You may wait in the front foyer and the office will dismiss your child to you.
- **Extended Day Program (EDP)** - If your child is registered and signed up for the Extended Day Program (EDP), they will be called down to the Cafeteria starting at 3:00. The EDP staff will sign them in before they continue with their program.

Early Dismissal:

- If a child will be picked up from school ***before the end of the day***, the parent/guardian must send a note to the teacher in the morning stating that the child will leave school early. The student's parent/guardian must come to the office to sign out his/her child, and then the child will be called to the office.

School Attendance:

Attendance Policy:

Regular school attendance and on-time arrival at school are important for your child's education. One of the most important things parents can do is bring their children to school every day on time. All students should plan to arrive at school **before 8:45**. The time between 8:35 and 8:50 is used for morning routines such as unpacking, before school work, attendance, lunch count, breakfast, etc. This time enables students to get organized and settle in for the start of school at **8:50**.

As you plan family trips and vacations we urge you to schedule those trips during times when school is not in session. Extended absences from school are discouraged because they are disruptive to your child's education. According to school policy, we do not provide homework or work in advance for students who miss school due to family trips or vacations. All family vacations and family trips that occur when school is in session will be recorded in your child's attendance record as an "unexcused absence." If an extended time away from school is unavoidable, please send in a note or email your child's teacher and include Mrs. Capello at capellok@westboroughk12.org, Mrs. Bograd at bograde@westboroughk12.org, and Mrs. D'Agata at dagataj@westboroughk12.org.

Tardiness:

It is important for students to arrive at school on time. **Students arriving after 8:50 are considered tardy** and **MUST** be signed in by a parent/guardian before going to class. We appreciate your support in having your child come to school on time.

Attendance Call-In System:

A call-in system for absent students has been established. If your child is going to be absent from school, you must call and leave a message on the attendance answering machine. You can call the main office at (508) 836-7750. If you know in advance that your child will be absent or late, you may send in a note the day before. The machine is also on between the hours of 4:00 p.m. and 8:00 a.m. You should leave your

name, your child's name, the teacher's name and a brief reason for the absence. Parents/guardians can still call school after 8:00 and report their child as absent.

In the morning, the office staff will compare the names on the absentee list with the names on the answering machine. If your child is marked absent by his or her classroom teacher and we do NOT receive a call or email from you, you will receive a phone call around 10:00 AM stating that your child is not in school today.

Purple Change of Plan Forms:

All Kindergarten and new families received a pad of purple "Change of Plans" forms in their first day packet. Please use these forms whenever you need to make a change in how or when your child is being dismissed. If you must have your child dismissed to someone other than yourself or another legal guardian, that person will be asked to present identification. Please let us know if you need a new purple pad. Send the form to school in the morning with your child when:

- You are going to dismiss your child early from school.
- There is a change in how your child typically gets home (bus or parent pick-up)
- There is a change in your child's Extended Day Program schedule

Breakfast/Lunch/Snack Information:

Breakfast:

- Students have the *option* of eating breakfast at home or at school. If your child will be eating breakfast at school they will go to the Cafeteria upon arrival to pick up their breakfast before heading to class to eat it as part of their morning routine. The first day of school is a full day and breakfast will be served.

Lunch:

- Your child may bring their lunch or get lunch at school. You may find the lunch menu on the website (http://hes.westboroughk12.org/for_families/lunch). The first day of school is a full day and lunch will be served.
- On early release days, "grab and go" lunch will be available for students as an option that they can take home with them.
- Lunch periods are 25 minutes long including clean-up time. You are encouraged to pack nutritious lunches your child can eat in this brief amount of time, if your child is not eating the school-provided lunch. Students eat lunch at the following times:

Note: Massachusetts is offering free meals to students for the 23-24 school year. Therefore, students will not need to pay for breakfast or lunch at school.

Kindergarten	11:10-11:35	Grade 2	11:40-12:05
Grade 1	12:10-12:35	Grade 3	12:40-1:05

Snack:

- All students have a snack period every day. Please send in a healthy snack and a drink. It is important to make sure your child knows which items are for snack and which are for lunch. We have several Hastings students with life-threatening food allergies; therefore, some classes may have special snack precautions that must be taken. Mrs. D'Agata and our nurse, Mrs. Merrill, will notify classroom families regarding allergies in a letter sent home. Please call Mrs. Merrill at school (508-836-7750) or ask your child's teacher if you have any questions regarding safe snacks.
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Safety Protocols:

At the beginning of the school year, staff members are trained in the Hastings safety protocols. These include medical protocols as well as our fire and evacuation drills, missing student protocol, and safety drills. The procedures are practiced throughout the school year with staff and all students under the guidance of the Westborough Police and Fire Department. The Hastings Health and Safety Team is composed of the principal, administrative assistant, school counselor, school nurse, staff representatives, our School Resource Officer, and a representative from the WFD. This team meets regularly to assess and update the procedures as necessary.

Family Communication:

As the school year begins, families often have questions. You may always call our school office at 508-836-7750 and we are happy to help!

Weekly News and Notes:

- The school principal will send a weekly newsletter to families every Thursday afternoon. Please view and read the newsletter every week as it will provide important updates for you and your family about Hastings and the town of Westborough. The newsletter communicates essential information and gives you a lens into our school!

Online First Day Packets:

- During the first week of school parents will be asked to complete online paperwork. Please read the online information very carefully and complete the tasks by the appropriate deadlines. This ensures a smooth start to our school year.
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Birthdays:

Unfortunately, no food may be sent into school to celebrate your child's birthday. You may provide a token gift for each child (ex: pencil) or a craft, if you wish. Please discuss your ideas with the teacher in advance.

Clothing:

Please remember to label all clothing and belongings with your child's name to help us get it back to you in the event it is lost. Students must wear sneakers for Physical Education and to play. Be sure to help your child dress appropriately for the weather. If snow should come our way and students want to play in the snow they need to wear snow pants and boots. Students should remove hats while indoors unless we are celebrating a special "Hat Day." Thank you!

Parent/Guardian Participation:

Volunteer Opportunities

- We will share more information regarding volunteer opportunities as we move further into the school year. Thank you in advance for any help you are able to provide!

Hastings Parent Group

- The Hastings Parent Group serves as a vehicle for communication, parent involvement, and service within Hastings School. The parent group is an organization of parents dedicated to enhancing the school life of our children. We sponsor a variety of activities and functions to benefit our students throughout the school year. If you would like more information, please join us at our monthly meetings! More information about meeting dates coming soon. All parents/guardians are welcomed and encouraged to attend!